

Old Fourth Ward Master Plan

September 2008



Prepared for the City of Atlanta Department
of Planning & Community Development
by Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates

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Smith-Dalia Architects

Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates

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Trees Atlanta

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Old Fourth Ward Master Plan

Part 1: Executive Summary



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Introduction

The Old Fourth Ward is a dynamic and diverse neighborhood with a rich history. Like many Atlanta neighborhoods, it is facing significant new challenges as it enters a period of rapid change. To understand and respond to these challenges, this plan explores the neighborhood's past, its present, and its potential to create a proactive, community-based framework for future growth.

Study Area Overview

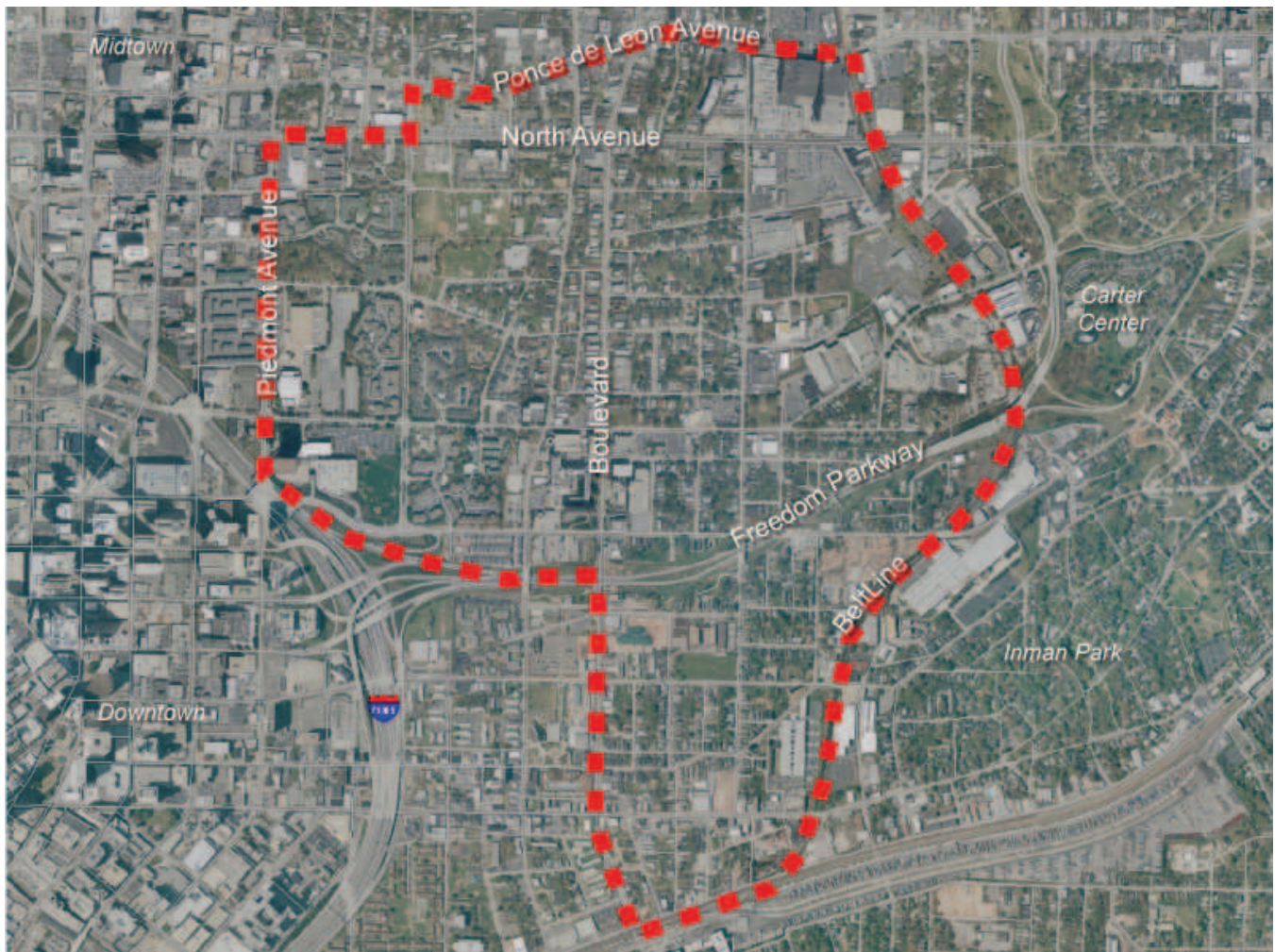
The study area for this effort includes the portions of the Old Fourth Ward bordered by Ponce de Leon Avenue to the north, the BeltLine to the east, Decatur Street to the South, Boulevard/Freedom Parkway to the southwest, and Piedmont Avenue to the west. It excludes parts of the neighborhood

south of Freedom Parkway and west of Boulevard, which were studied in 2005 as part of the Butler-Auburn Redevelopment Plan Update.

The study area includes a broad mix of land uses. These range from multifamily along Boulevard; to traditional single-family areas east, west and south of it; to gated multifamily complexes and high-rises in the area cleared by urban renewal in the 1960s and 1970s.

Historic resources also abound in the Old Fourth Ward, including the birthplace of civil rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic homes and business line many neighborhood streets.

The map below shows the study area in red. It encompasses 763 acres and over 2,000 parcels.



Old Fourth Ward Master Plan study area

Master Plan Goals

The goals of this master plan are to:

- Define what the Old Fourth Ward should be in 25 or even 50 years.
- Encourage a diverse and sustainable mix of housing, employment, shopping, and open space.
- Accommodate and encourage smart growth and redevelopment while protecting the neighborhood's existing character, businesses, and residents.
- Improve the neighborhood's visual character.
- Reestablish broken connections across the BeltLine, Freedom Parkway, and I-75/85.
- Leverage growth and development along the BeltLine to foster improvements throughout the neighborhood.
- Create a stronger identity and character for the Old Fourth Ward.

It is was these community-based goals that guided the master planning effort.

Existing Conditions

The planning process included a detailed review of existing conditions. Transportation, land use, urban design, historic resources, demographics, parks, and other existing conditions were carefully reviewed during the planning process to identify opportunities and issues.

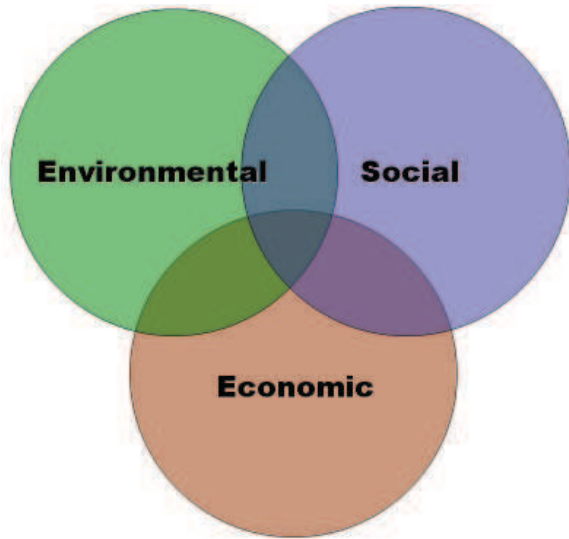
Among the key findings are that:

- Neighborhood residents are diverse in terms of age, race, income, and educational level, but unchecked growth could displace existing residents.
- The neighborhood has a wealth of historic resources.
- Historically the neighborhood was characterized by a human-scaled, architecturally rich, urban fabric, yet major damage was done to this fabric in the twentieth century.
- Its mix of land uses is dominated by single-family houses, multifamily blocks, industrial



The Old Fourth Ward is rich in historic resources and sense of place

- zones on its fringes, and commercial uses.
- Development pressure is changing the face of many parts of the neighborhood, particularly adjacent to the BeltLine.
- The neighborhood is well served by schools, churches, and public facilities, but public safety challenges remain, particularly along Boulevard.
- The neighborhood benefits from several large and small parks, but new development will increase the demand on these facilities and demand new park spaces.
- Bus and rail service exist in and near the neighborhood, and new facilities are likely, yet much remains to be done to maximize use of existing routes.
- Vehicular traffic is well served by an existing grid of streets, but opportunities exist to create new streets and improve roadway operations.
- Walking is supported by compact land use patterns, but poor sidewalk conditions and pedestrian-unfriendly development discourage walking.
- A range of bicycle facilities exist, including off-street trails and on-street bike routes, but opportunities exist to improve biking conditions.



The three elements of sustainability are key to the plan

Sustainability

The Old Fourth Ward must be a national model of sustainable development. Sustainability is defined by the relationship of three elements: environmental, social, and economic. A balance of the three is the guiding principle of this study.

- **Land Use Recommendations** will encourage higher density development to promote walking, biking, and transit use.
- **Infrastructure & Facilities Recommendations** will reduce crime and promote learning. Stormwater management features will decrease runoff and beautify the area.
- **Parks & Open Space Recommendations** will provide new open spaces, including gardens that will allow residents to grow food and keep food dollars local.
- **Urban Design Recommendations** will create a form that supports walking, community life, and aesthetics. They will create beautiful places that will instill civic pride and order.
- **Historic Preservation Recommendations** will minimize new construction in favor of adaptive reuse. They will also support the preservation of the community's social fabric.
- **Housing & Economic Development Recommendations** will provide opportunities for residents and businesses and minimize potential displacement.

- **Transportation Recommendations** will reduce driving, improve air quality, promote health, and allow residents to save money.

Land Use Recommendations

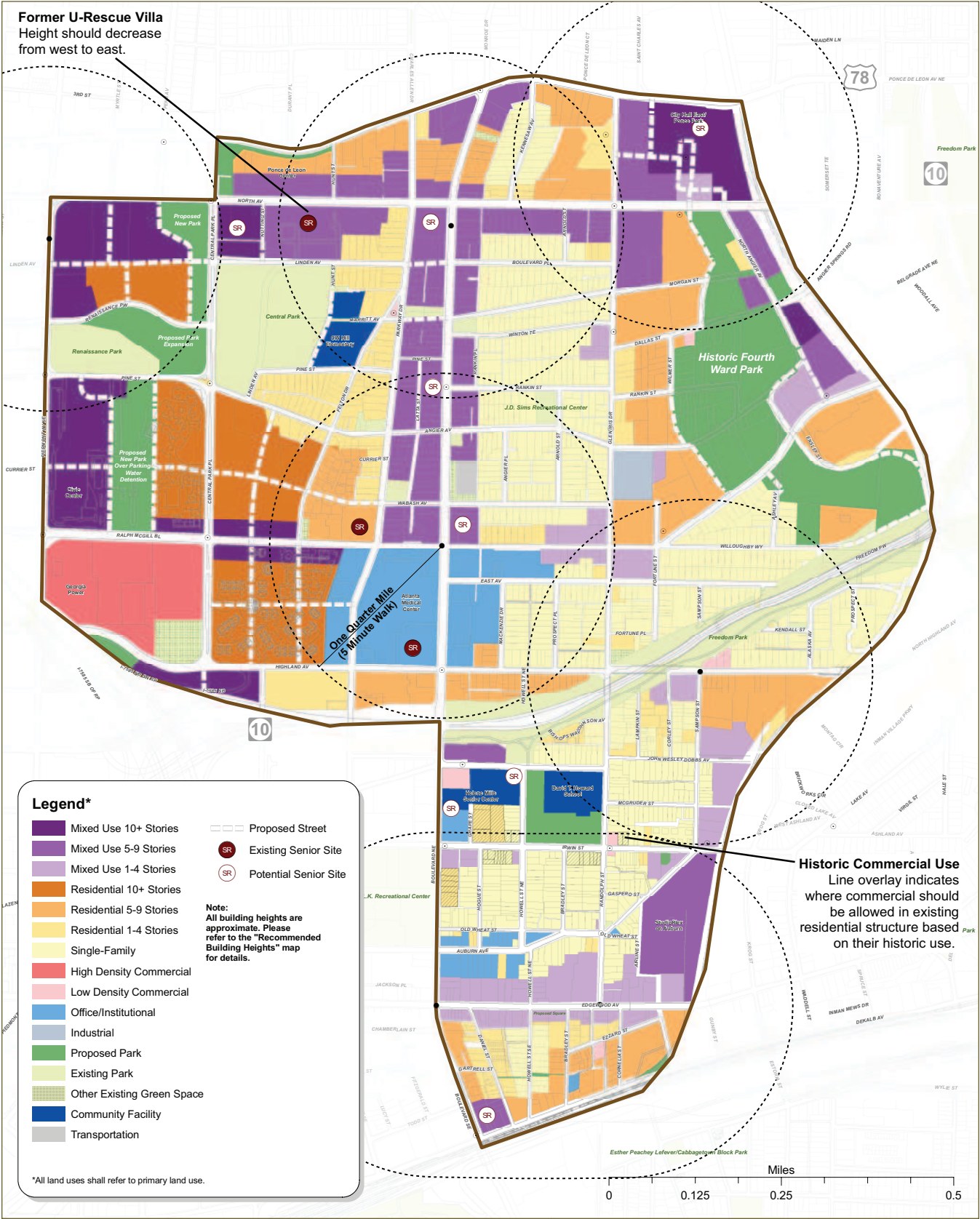
The recommended land use plan permits growth, but directs it into appropriate locations.

- Encourage a mix of land uses.
- Preserve single-family areas.
- Focus growth into corridors and near transit.
- Support appropriate infill housing.
- Provide transitions between new development and existing residential areas.
- Incorporate green building standards.
- Vary building height in response to context.
- Support and expand code enforcement.
- Utilize quality of life zoning districts.
- Support pedestrian-oriented retail nodes.
- Encourage catalytic redevelopment at:
 - *Historic Fourth Ward Park Area*
 - *Boulevard Corridor*
 - *Former U-Rescue Villa Site*
 - *Civic Center & Sci-Trek*
 - *Renaissance Park*
 - *The MLK Historic District*

Table 1.1: Proposed Land Use Summary

	Acreage
Existing Park	25.1
Proposed New Park	64.7
Industrial	2.6
High Density Commercial	17.8
Mixed-Use 1-4 Stories	34.6
Mixed-Use 5-9 Stories	76.1
Mixed-Use 10+ Stories	47.7
Office/Institutional	29.0
Residential 1-4 Stories	51.0
Residential 5-9 Stories	85.7
Residential 10+ Stories	47.8
Single-Family	126.5
Community Facility	10.2
Total:	608.6

Recommended Land Uses



Infrastructure & Facility Recommendations

Fixing aging water and sewer pipes is a priority, as is public safety.

- Hide utility wires when feasible.
- Identify new stormwater detention sites.
- Improve street lighting.
- Support the Sewer Evaluation and Rehabilitation Project.
- Complete the Historic Fourth Ward Park stormwater management facility.
- Increase the number and visibility of public safety officers.
- Improve urban design to minimize crime.
- Use technology strategically to tackle crime.
- Hold property owners accountable.
- Increase community involvement.
- Open a police mini-precinct.
- Create "Boulevard Blue."
- Install Boulevard security cameras.
- Support partnerships between colleges, universities, and neighborhood schools.

Park & Open Space Recommendations

The revitalization of existing parks and the creation of 65 acres of new parks will benefit the neighborhood and the city.

- Support the Historic Fourth Ward Park.
- Require open space in new developments.
- Encourage public art.
- Preserve open space around the water tower.
- Encourage tree planting in front yards.
- Support an interconnected green network.
- Allow access to the Howard School fields.
- Support forming park partnerships.
- Encourage xeriscaping and native species.
- Rehabilitate Renaissance Park.
- Expand Renaissance Park.
- Create a new Park Place Park.



Community gardens can provide local food and give residents a chance to care for their parks

- Turn Angier Avenue into a "Green Street."
- Create a park conservancy.
- Install community gardens at:
 - *Freedom Park (two locations)*
 - *Parkway-Angier Park*
 - *Central and Renaissance Parks*
 - *Auburn Avenue at Hogue Street*
 - *Historic Fourth Ward Park*
- Rehabilitate green spaces at:
 - *Merritts Park*
 - *Boulevard-Angier Park*
 - *Morgan-Boulevard Park*
 - *Georgia Power substation*
- Establish a mid-block pedestrian way/park between Daniel and Bradley Streets.

Urban Design Recommendations

- Allow architectural variety, but require quality.
- Provide modern buildings out of historic districts.
- Provide pedestrian-oriented supplemental sidewalk zones.
- Require good urban design:
 - *Parking behind buildings*
 - *No gated streets*
 - *Buildings that form a street wall*
 - *Doors accessible from the sidewalk*

- Active ground floor uses, including storefronts, stoops, porches, or forecourts
- Pedestrian-scaled signage
- Transparent ground floor glass
- Continue the modern home tour.
- Install new gateway markers at:
 - Ponce de Leon Avenue at Piedmont Avenue and Boulevard
 - Ralph McGill Boulevard at Piedmont Avenue and Boulevard
 - Highland Avenue at Piedmont Avenue
 - Boulevard at Freedom Parkway
 - Irwin Street at I-75/I-85 and the BeltLine
 - Decatur Street at Boulevard

Historic Preservation Recommendations

The character of the Old Fourth Ward must be preserved if it is to retain its quality of life.

- Encourage historic rehabilitation.
- Preserve the integrity of the King District.
- Amend the MLK Landmark District:
 - Allow commercial uses along Irwin Street.
 - Permit hardiplank siding.
 - Permit two story infill housing.
 - Reduce the effort needed to demolish non-contributing structures.

Housing & Economic Recommendations

The Old Fourth Ward must be a sustainable neighborhood that allows long-time residents to



Building design should embrace the pedestrian and encourage walking over driving

remain. Unlike other Atlanta neighborhoods where residents are displaced by the revitalization efforts intended to benefit them, this must not happen here. Rather, a model for growth must allow those who want to remain to do so.

- Prevent the involuntary displacement of existing residents.
- Strive to allow residents to age in place.
- Encourage a mix of housing price points.
- Strive for a mix of multifamily units, including three-bedroom units.
- Strive for 20 percent affordable housing.
- Encourage senior housing.
- Support the recommendations of the BeltLine Affordable Housing Advisory Board.
- Support existing incentives.
- Encourage the creation of temporary business innovation zones on vacant lots.
- Support the rehabilitation of key buildings.

Table 1.2: Master Plan Build-Out Summary

	New Non-Residential	New Jobs	New Dwelling Units	New 20% Affordable Units	Net New Dwelling Units ¹
Mixed-Use 10+	2,080,000 sf	4,200	3,800	760	3,200
Mixed-Use 5-9	1,660,000 sf	3,300	3,800	760	3,100
Mixed-Use 1-4	210,000 sf	400	900	180	800
Residential 10+	420,000 sf	800	3,800	760	3,400
Residential 5-9	750,000 sf	1,500	4,300	860	3,400
Total:	5,120,000 sf	10,200	16,600	3,320	13,900

1: New units less existing units that must be demolished before redevelopment can occur.

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- Focus on catalytic redevelopment sites.
- Create a community improvement district.
- Convene an affordable Housing Technical Advisory Program.
- Create zoning to allow “granny flats.”
- Continue neighborhood marketing.

Transportation Recommendations

In the Old Fourth Ward, transportation means providing accessibility and mobility for people, not just cars. This means establishing a balanced system of transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities, as well as modest vehicular upgrades.

Pedestrian

- Require developments to upgrade sidewalks.
- Provide pedestrian-oriented buildings.
- Ensure that sidewalks are accessible.
- Maximize on-street parking.
- Continue to support tree planting efforts.
- Install major streetscape projects on:
 - *Boulevard*
 - *North Avenue*
 - *Glen Iris Drive*
 - *Randolph Street*
 - *Edgewood Avenue*
 - *Highland Avenue*
 - *Irwin Street*
 - *Ralph McGill Boulevard*
 - *Angier Avenue*
 - *Parkway Drive*
 - *Piedmont Avenue*
 - *Ponce de Leon Avenue*
- Create neighborhood walking routes.
- Repair neighborhood sidewalks.
- Upgrade the Sampson Street pedestrian bridge.
- Install mid-block crossings.

Bicycle

- Continue to provide bicycle parking in new developments.



Major streetscape projects will encourage walking and improve neighborhood safety

- Enforce no-parking laws in bike lanes.
- Install bicycle lanes on:
 - *Parkway Drive, from Highland Avenue to Ponce de Leon Avenue*
 - *Ralph McGill, from the Freedom Park to Ivan Allen Boulevard*
- Install bicycle sharrows on:
 - *Highland Avenue*
 - *Glen Iris Drive/Randolph Street*
 - *Irwin Street/Lake Avenue*
 - *Angier Avenue*
- Complete the Centennial Park connector trail.

Vehicular

- Encourage different uses in walking distance.
- Limit vehicular access to alleys and side streets via zoning requirements.
- Require access management.
- Maximize on-street parking.
- Install medians on portions of:
 - *Boulevard*
 - *North Avenue*
 - *Ralph McGill Boulevard.*
- Improve Edgewood Avenue at Boulevard.
- Install traffic signals at:
 - *Ralph McGill Boulevard at Willoughby Way and Fortune Street*

Transportation Projects



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- North Avenue at City Hall East
- Hutting Street at North Avenue
- Install left turn striping at:
 - Glen Iris Drive at Highland Avenue
 - Randolph Street at Irwin Street
- Install four-way stop signs at:
 - Irwin Street at Sampson Street
 - Fortune Street at East Avenue
- Convert JW Dobbs Avenue to one-way east-bound east of Randolph Street.
- Implement Boulevard signal coordination
- Rebuild the Freedom Parkway/Downtown Connector ramp.
- Construct or require new streets with development at:
 - Merritts Avenue from Boulevard to Parkway
 - Hunt Street from Linden Avenue to Pine Street
 - Hutting Street from Linden Street to North Avenue
 - North Avenue on AHA property
 - The Civic Center site
 - Linden Avenue to Piedmont Avenue
 - Penn Avenue to Renaissance Parkway
 - Central Park Place to the Civic Center
 - The block bounded by Central Park Place, Ralph McGill Boulevard, Parkway, and Highland Avenue
 - Renaissance Parkway to North Avenue
 - Linden Street From Parkway Drive to Boulevard
 - Dallas Street from Angier Springs Road
 - Wilmer Street to Ralph McGill Boulevard
 - North Angier Avenue to Ralph McGill Boulevard
 - Willoughby Way to Ensley Street
 - Ensley Street to Elizabeth Street
- Install neighborhood speed humps.

Transit

- Support efforts to increase bus frequency.



Boulevard as it is today, with utility poles, little greenery, and dangerous pedestrian crossings



Boulevard after the proposed streetscape improvements, showing new median and potential redevelopment

- Reduce closely-spaced bus stops.
- Construct 10 new bus shelters.
- Install trash receptacles at 25 bus stops.
- Build the Peachtree/Auburn Streetcar.
- Study potential long-term streetcars along:
 - Ponce de Leon Avenue
 - Highland Avenue
 - Boulevard Monroe
- Reinstate MARTA bus Route 3.
- Implement BeltLine Transit.